

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Chorley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119670
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327105
Inspection date	29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	209
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	21
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Patrick Parkinson
Headteacher	Mrs Lynda McLoughlin
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brooke Street Chorley Lancashire PR6 0LB
Telephone number	01257 262659

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	29 January 2009
Inspection number	327105

Fax number

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Age group 3-11

Inspection date 29 January 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' progress and the standards they reach, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2
- the consistency of the quality of the teaching and learning and the curriculum
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, particularly in relation to monitoring the school's performance and self-evaluation.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, nationally published assessment data, the school's records of pupils' progress and standards, observations of lessons and the school's plans for further improvement. Discussions with pupils, staff and governors were held and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils at this average sized school are from White British family backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school holds a number of awards including: Healthy Schools, Activemark Gold, Investors in People and a Learning Excellence award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sacred Heart is a good school providing good value for money. Many aspects are outstanding, such as pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the way in which every pupil is cared for, nurtured and included fully in all that is on offer. Parents are confident that their children receive a good quality of education commenting on how an 'atmosphere of calm and continual encouragement, pervades throughout.'

Although children's skills, when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are below those found typically, learning gets off to an extremely successful start. By the end of Year 6, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. In recent years the standards reached in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average. Standards in 2008 were broadly average, which reflects the higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. School data and inspection evidence indicate that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 in recent years have remained broadly average, reflecting satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 rather than good.

Pupils' good progress results from good teaching and learning overall. Some is outstanding and there are particular strengths in the quality of teaching, particularly at the end of Key stage 2. Teaching and learning are supported by an effective and enjoyable curriculum. Making sure that all pupils are included in everything on offer has high priority. In lessons, enthusiastic teaching, exciting and stimulating activities that are well matched to pupils' varying capabilities, effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes and good quality marking, all contribute well to pupils' good achievement. Pupils have a keen awareness of what they need to do next in order to reach their learning targets, especially in Years 5 and 6. In Years 1 and 2, these best teaching practices are still developing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceedingly positive. Pupils behave extremely well and are keen to learn. They say that they thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good attendance. They speak knowledgeably about how to keep healthy and act safely. They have every confidence that there is always someone on hand to help if they have any concerns. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils play an important role in making their school a happier, safer and healthier place to learn. Although they delight in taking on responsibilities, such as being 'school councillors', they are well aware that being kind and caring always is 'just the right thing to do'. Pupils talk sensitively about the diverse cultures within Britain and about the plight of others in communities around the world. They are enthusiastic about fundraising efforts to support them. These wonderful personal qualities provide an encouraging platform upon which to develop their academic achievement even further, and give them a good preparation for becoming confident and successful young adults of tomorrow.

Pupils' good academic achievement and outstanding personal development are the result of good quality leadership, management and governance. The headteacher's enthusiasm for ensuring that pupils achieve well in a very safe, warm and highly inclusive setting is evident, successfully building on the quality of education offered over a number of years. Excellent promotion of community cohesion includes very effective steps taken to ensure that pupils have a particularly secure knowledge of the ethnic diversity of Britain and further afield.

Initiatives, aimed at raising standards by the end of Year 2, are showing small shoots of success. Even so, the school is well aware that accelerating progress and raising standards by the end of Year 2 remains a key priority.

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. They ensure that the school has excellent procedures to maintain inclusion for all which contributes to pupils' outstanding levels of personal development and good academic achievement. Recent changes in leadership and management roles and in governance have been made. The skills of those new to post, particularly in reviewing the school's performance, monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, are still developing. This explains why, for example, their view of the school's performance is sometimes over generous. Nevertheless, good improvement since the previous inspection, such as developing the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning, now including their behaviour, coupled with a strong sense of teamwork, professionalism and commitment amongst staff, give the school a good platform upon which to move forward successfully.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children start Nursery, their skills are lower than typical for their age. Exceedingly warm and caring relationships between adults and children, along with the bright, lively and well resourced learning environment ensure that children quickly develop a thirst for learning. They settle into school routines with ease and feel particularly safe. Staff regularly find out how well children are progressing. They use their on-going records particularly well to ensure that activities offered are well planned and that skilful questioning helps children to build securely on what they can already do. Adults make the most of every opportunity to help children to learn to get along well together, talk about learning, grow in confidence and independence and to behave really well. As a result, their personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Children develop a keen understanding of diversity of other cultures around the world. They show great delight and excitement, for example, when performing a dragon dance as part of their Chinese New Year celebrations. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader makes a strong contribution to improving the provision, which has strengthened since the previous inspection. She, along with a committed and enthusiastic team, search continually for new opportunities to boost learning. Consequently, by the time children start Year 1, they have made outstanding progress. There are more children reaching and exceeding the expected levels than previously and most are working beyond the level expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2, so that standards rise.
- Extend the skills of leaders, managers and governors, so that they contribute fully to reviewing the school's performance, self-evaluation and to planning the way forward.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Chorley, Lancashire, PR6 0LB

Thank you so much for the extremely warm welcome you gave the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed being part of your school community and you helped us to see why you enjoy school so very much. You were all extremely keen to talk to us and answered all our questions thoughtfully, politely and maturely. I particularly enjoyed watching pupils from Years 5 and 6 take part in discussions with local magistrates. It helped me to see just how much you learn about the roles of professionals in your community and how you, too, can become good citizens. It was really pleasing to see just how well you all get along together and your behaviour is excellent. I was also very impressed with how much you know about the importance of helping others less fortunate than yourselves in other parts of the world. All the adults care a great deal about you. They give you lots of encouragement to grow in confidence and learn the skills you will need as adults in the future. You are so very kind and caring towards one another, too. No wonder you feel so safe and happy at school.

Your parents told me how pleased they are with your school. I agree with them that you go to a good school. By Year 6, you reach standards that are higher than found in many other schools. The rate at which you learn is also faster, and it is very fast in the Nursery and Reception class and in Years 5 and 6. These high standards and your wonderful attitudes to your learning are the reasons why you are well prepared for secondary school. Even though the adults who work at your school know that you do well in your learning, they still search for ways to improve your school, so that it continues to improve. This is why I have asked the school to make sure that:

- pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn as quickly as children do in the Nursery and Reception class
- the adults who are responsible for checking how well the school is doing keep a closer eye on the changes they are making, so that they can be sure that you learn just as quickly right across the school.

You can help your school by making sure that you know how well you are getting on, and by always checking what you still have to do to reach your learning targets. Of course, you should continue to try your best in everything that you do.

I wish you all the best for a successful future.

Kathryn Dodd

Lead inspector